

Anne Robert Jacques
Turgot

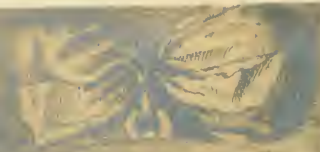
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J. TURGOT

MINISTRE DES FINANCES ET DE LA MANUFACTURE

A SKETCH
OF
ANNE ROBERT JACQUES
TURGOT

*WITH A TRANSLATION OF HIS LETTER TO
DOCTOR PRICE*

BOSTON
GEO. H. ELLIS, PRINTER, 272 CONGRESS STREET
1899

DC
137.5
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IN MEMORY

OF

WILLIAM GARDINER HAMMOND

OF ST. LOUIS, MO.

The Most Learned Civilian in the United States.

TO HIM I OWE MY APPRECIATION OF THE VALUE OF THE
ROMAN LAW, AND MY RESPECT FOR THE HIGHER
BRANCHES OF JURISPRUDENCE
AND LEGISLATION.

JAN. 10, 1899.

J. M. B.

931291

SKETCH.

WASHINGTON and his associates warned their countrymen against entangling alliances with the European powers.

M. Turgot, Minister of State under Louis XVI., our great friend in France, in his letter of the 22d of March, 1778, to Dr. Price, our best friend in London, in relation to the new republic writes, "In order that all these good results, which he foresaw were possible in America, may be brought about, it will be necessary for America to keep itself from imitating or becoming an image of Europe."

Again, he goes on to say: "We see her [America] irrevocably independent. Will she be happy in her freedom? This new nation is situated so advantageously to give the world the example of a constitution where the individual enjoys all his rights, freely uses all his faculties, and is only to be governed by nature, right, and justice. But will the people know how to

/ form such a constitution? Will they know how to ground it on eternal foundations? America is the hope of the human race. It may become its model. It could prove to the world by deeds that men can be free and peaceful, and are able to dispense with fetters of all kinds, which the tyrants and impostors have pretended to impose upon them under the pretext of the public good."

In regard to the moral sciences, particularly with the noblest of them all, the highest statesmanship, it is otherwise. Here we might profit by the experience of Europe.

It requires but a very superficial acquaintance with juridical history to know that a broad and all-comprehensive knowledge of the Roman law, of the historical school of which perhaps Montesquieu was the founder, of the Physiocrates in France, of Immanuel Kant, of Thomas Hobbes, of Jeremy Bentham and his great followers, is necessary for that end. Now, as far as I can find out, these are known only partially in our law schools. This is the more surprising, inasmuch as the Americans have an especial talent for law, producing the best of legists. In historical sense they seem to

be deficient. If the philosophy of evolution is correct, this sense is as necessary here as it is in geology or in any other science.

It has been my good fortune during the last few years to become somewhat acquainted with many of the works of the above-mentioned great writers, among them with M. Turgot, perhaps the noblest of them all. A sense of gratitude and admiration leads me to print this humble study of him. To it I have annexed an admirable translation of M. Turgot's celebrated letter to Dr. Price, made for me by my friend, Helen Billings Morris. Many of the dangers anticipated by M. Turgot have been obviated by the great freedom and strong political sense of our people. But it would have been well, had we heeded his counsels; namely, against the monarchical militarism of Europe (America, he said, is destined to become great, not by war, but by culture), against great taxes, the tendency to borrow, an excessive commercial spirit. He called upon us to exhibit an example of political, religious, commercial, and industrial liberty. He himself gave an example of ability, courage, and purity in office.

These were his contributions to the political moral

currency in all forms of government and to all times. These counsels and acts are as pertinent now as they were with Moses in the wilderness, Christ in Jerusalem Marcus Aurelius in Rome, Washington and Lincoln in America. They should not be forgotten. We should teach them to our young people, and, better still, act them out in market-places.

J. M. B.

JAN. 10, 1899.

The photographic portrait is taken from a 12mo edition of Condorcet's "Vie de Monsieur Turgot," published at Berne, chez Kirchberger & Hatton, Libraires, MDCCLXXXVII."

ANNE ROBERT JACQUES TURGOT,

OF FRANCE,

Sometimes called "The Godlike."

BORN MAY 10, 1727.

DIED MARCH 18, 1781.

By nature and character, great. Fired with an uncompromising love of truth.

On the title-page of Condorcet's "Vie de Turgot" we have these lines from Lucan :—

"Secta fuit servare modum, finemque tenere,
Naturamque sequi, patriaeque impendere vitam ;
Non sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo."

Lucan.

These have been admirably translated by Dr. William Everett :—

“This way, this creed unmoved stern Cato drew :
 To keep the mean, and hold the end in view ;
 Nature his guide, his life his country's own ;
 Born for mankind, and not for self alone.”

They were originally written for Cato of Utica, but they apply more fitly to Turgot.

His family was originally from Scotland, settled in Normandy during the Crusades. The portraits we have of him show this, a mixture of Scotch good sense and French refinement. His grandfather and his father were long in civil life.

His mother was a Martineau. He was the third son.

His early education was unfortunate. His mother did not understand him, disliked his fondness for books. She desired to see him with refined manners, upbraided him for his *gaucherie*. He became shy and nervously sensitive.

It is thought that this rather unnatural boy life affected his whole subsequent career.

At his schools he made a decided advance. First at the Collège Louis le Grand, then at the Collège au Plessis. Here he formed a deep friendship with Abbé Sigorgne, and learned from him to substitute for the

fanciful theories of Descartes the demonstrable physics of Newton. Being intended for the Church, he was sent to St. Sulpice and afterward to the Sorbonne. In these schools he soon showed those qualities for which he was distinguished in after life,—an enthusiastic love of literature, prodigious memory, penetrating intellect, sound judgment, a readiness to share his superior means with the poorer pupils.

Pure, simple, modest, frank, gay.

At the Sorbonne he composed and delivered publicly two theses in Latin, 1750: the first, "On the Advantages which the Christian Religion has conferred on the Human Race": the second, "On the Successive Advances of the Human Mind." This latter was one of the earliest enunciations of the doctrine of the perfectibility of the human race.

His belief in this became part of his being, gave an impulse to his culture, and inspired his whole public life.

He availed himself of the excellent library of the Sorbonne to translate into French from other languages, say from Greek, Latin, German, Italian, and English.

In 1749 his first paper on political economy, "Paper Money," exposing the fallacies of John Law.

At twenty-three years of age he renounced his intention of a clerical career. His comrades endeavored to persuade him, but in vain. He told them, "It is impossible for me to wear a mask." His father consented: but he died in 1751, and that put an end to his life at the Sorbonne.

He now applied himself to the study of law, without neglecting his literary, mathematical, and scientific studies.

In 1753 he wrote a remarkable paper on "Toleration, and against the Interference of the Temporal Powers in Theological Disputes." He now frequented the salons and enjoyed the society of D'Alembert, Montesquieu, Helvétius, Morellet, Marmontel, Galiani, Raynal, and other distinguished men and women. Among the latter was Madame Graffigny, to whom he addressed a letter on "The Education of the Young," which acquired notoriety subsequently through Rousseau. And now, as always, amid all these attractions, male and female, he would not surrender himself to any coterie. He disliked the spirit of party or sect. "It

is this spirit," he has said a hundred times, "that makes enemies to useful truths. As soon as *savans*, in their pride, give themselves to form a body, to say 'we,' to believe themselves able to impose laws upon public opinion, thoughtful public opinion revolts against them; for it wishes to receive laws from truth only, and not from any authority."

In 1753 he was appointed *Maître des Requêtes*, the exact function of which does not appear. He held the position nine years.

About this time he entered into relations with the Physiocrates Quesnay, Gournay, and others. He was attracted to them by similarity of views on social and economical subjects. He was undoubtedly the most brilliant of the group of these illustrious men, but even then he maintained his complete independence of judgment. No one ever illustrated more fully that line of Henley's,—

"I am the captain of my soul."

In May, 1753, he accepted a seat in the new Royal Chamber which was created in place of the Parliament, then exiled. Here he made himself conspicuous by

opposing the political influence of the Parliament, etc. During this period he contributed to the discussion of public questions; namely, on "Toleration," "Le Conciliateur," a translation of Dr. Josiah Tucker's work on the "Naturalization of Foreign Protestants," five articles to the Encyclopædia.

In 1755-56 he accompanied Gournay, one of the founders of the Physiocrates, in his tour of inspection; and he subsequently travelled alone in Eastern France and Switzerland. Here he met Voltaire, and formed a friendship which lasted through his life.

In 1761 (thirty-four years of age) he was appointed Superintendent of Limoges.

"The people here were sunk in poverty and barbarism, with poor roads, poor soil, oppressed by the militia system, by the *corvée* a system of enforced labor on the roads without pay." These depressing circumstances were no obstacles to Turgot: on the contrary, they seemed to be attractions. "He wished to do something before he died (and he knew that his life would be short) to relieve the misery of France and to help the world's general advancement." Here, he thought was a chance.

He held this office thirteen years.

One of his first objects was to acquire a clear knowledge of facts. For this purpose he addressed a circular to his sub-delegates, specifying points on which he desired information. He endeavored to inspire these sub-delegates with his own enthusiasm, thoroughness, and respect for the poor. Rising above the common prejudices of the philosophers, he sought the co-operation of the curés, and found them to be earnest and active assistants.

One of the most arbitrary and cruel taxes collected from the agriculturists was the *taille*. It is estimated that the amount of this and all the other taxes was four-fifths of the revenue of a peasant proprietor's income. From this tax the superiors in rank and wealth were exempt.

"Turgot condemned this tax, but he was obliged to administer the law with as much fairness and with as little injustice as possible." About four months after his appointment he obtained a declaration from the king for a more regular assessment of the *taille*.

An opportunity for removal to a better paid and easier province was declined.

He continued year after year to petition the general government for relief in vain, but he was not disheartened.

Another infamous tax was the *corvée*. "By this the peasants were obliged to work on the roads without pay." Here, too, the privileged classes were exempt.

His manner of dealing with the *corvée* was a simple one, the beginning of a revolution. He put competent workmen on the roads, paid them, superintended them himself, and defrayed the expense by a moderate tax on the rate-payers. The roads of Limousin became roads indeed. He also succeeded in abolishing the military *corvée*.

His next great reform was for "freedom of the corn trade." This probably was the precursor of the great movement in Great Britain seventy-four years after, and of "free trade" everywhere in time to come. Here he had against him the conservatives and the selfishness of the agriculturists in his own province.

In 1770 and 1771 a famine devastated Limousin. "To mitigate this, his whole energy was called forth. Various measures were adopted, but the greatest

caution exercised to prevent mendicity. He had the greatest sympathy for the *pauvres honteux* (the respectable poor). He desired a special fund for them, to be distributed by the curés, or by those who would keep their own counsel." "When he had exhausted the public funds available for relief, he incurred a personal debt of 20,000 livres for that purpose."

The difficulty ceased latter part of 1771. Other reforms carried out by him in Limousin were the improvement in the militia drawing, the billeting of the soldiers upon the people, agricultural methods (he introduced the cultivation of the potato), veterinary science, medical assistance for the poor, especially in midwifery. On one of his official visits to Paris he met Adam Smith, with whom he made an intimate and long friendship. There can be no doubt that Mr. Smith's intercourse with Turgot and other members of the Physiocratic circle had a great influence on "The Wealth of Nations."

During his residence in Limoges he wrote and published many works on economic subjects. In all of these he showed his strong good sense, and, above all, his reliance on truth and freedom. Unhappily, his sug-

gestions were in advance of his time, and, I fear, of our time. Yet the time will come when his principles will be the common practice of the street, and when men will erect statues to him.

Mr. W. Walker Stephens, in his admirable "Life and Writings of Turgot," in English, writes: "In Turgot's letter, written one hundred and twenty years ago, the reader will observe that its arguments and illustrations are as literally as true now against the miserable protectionist fallacies circulated by the Republican party in the United States as originally they were against the narrow views of M. Terray." M. Terray was the restrictionist against whom M. Turgot wrote his letters.

In 1774 Louis XV. died. The new king, Louis XVI., and the new Prime Minister, Count de Masuze, invited Turgot to a seat in the cabinet. This ended his service at Limoges. He had given to them the best part of his life. It had been a daily fight, not unsuccessful. He left the province better than he found it. The people loved him because they believed in his integrity and ability, and he believed in them. He appealed to their reason and moral sense, came down to them,

explaining carefully the grounds on which his orders were based. He never treated them as children.

The best writers on government — Hobbes, Montesquieu, M. de la Rivière, the Physiocrates, Kant, Bentham, Austin, John S. Mill, Dumont, Hildreth — insist upon it that the so-called common people desire and are capable of understanding the elements of economic and political truths, provided they are taught by well-trained, educated, able, thoroughly disinterested leaders. Good government, they maintain, is possible only where you have these two conditions ; namely, the mass of the people instructed in the *elements* of social, economic, and political life, and a body of *gens lumineux*, —“light-diffusing,” unselfish, courageous men, believing in and loving to instruct the people.

M. Turgot believed in these conditions, and endeavored to realize them in Limousin ; but the conditions then existing made it impossible.

The general government was indifferent to his earnest requests. The “local nobility, whose privileges he had curtailed, were hostile to him. But the peasantry understood and adored him. His departure was announced by the curés, who celebrated mass on

his account. The countrymen suspended their work in order to be present, and cried, 'It is wisely done by the king to have taken M. Turgot, but it is very sad for us that we have lost him.'"

Turgot's motives in leaving Limoges for a higher position were that he thought that he would now have the opportunity of initiating laws of administration for all France, and not for a province alone.

His first appointment was as Minister of Marines (July 20, 1774). He remained here only two months, when he was appointed Comptroller-general of Finance (Aug. 24, 1774). He succeeded Terray, a great rascal, who left affairs in great confusion, which gave Turgot the greatest anxiety. He sought an interview with the king, and frankly laid before him his fears and his hopes. Louis XVI. was deeply impressed by his minister, and assured him of his support. He then addressed a letter to the king, which became one of the documents of French history.

No Bankruptcy.

No Increase of Taxes.

No Loans.

He warned him against the great demands made upon his kind-heartedness. "You must reduce expenditures below revenue, to create a surplus to be applied to the redemption of old debts."

"He reminds him from whence the income came; namely, from the people already overtaxed."

Economy and wisdom were to be his only resources.

Maurepas proposed to recall the Parliaments.

To this Turgot was opposed. He pressed his objections on the king, who again said: "Fear nothing. I will sustain you." In September, 1774, he had the satisfaction of issuing a decree establishing free commerce in corn.

It was the custom at court for the Farmers-general to make presents to influential persons on the occasion of obtaining contracts,—in plain terms, bribes. One was offered to M. Turgot, which he at once declined. Moreover, he explained this dangerous custom to the king, and induced him to rebuke it. The reforms instituted by him were the *octroi* duty, the disabilities of foreigners, and certain evil practices in the meat market.

Early in 1775 he was stricken by a severe attack of

the gout, which detained him four months in his chamber. This, however, did not prevent him from a heavy correspondence in relation to the cattle plague (epizootic) and the *taille*, in which he obtained some mitigations. The corn riots, commencing at Dijon, spread throughout the country. The king was alarmed, yielded a little to the rioters, but soon saw his mistake, and summoned Turgot to his relief. The latter remained firm, adopted the most vigorous measures, and was at last entirely successful.

Louis XVI. was consecrated at Rheims June 15, 1775. It was customary for the king on that occasion to swear "to exterminate all heretics." Turgot was opposed to this, and addressed a memorial to him "Sur la Tolérance." The clergy endeavored to overcome the young monarch. Turgot tells him that "the Church is not a temporal power. The prince who orders his subject to profess a religion he does not believe in commands a crime." Here again we have courage, a constant and perpetual desire for truth and freedom.

In July, 1775, largely through Turgot's influence, Malesherbes was induced to take a seat in the cabinet.

He was another noble, pure-minded patriot. Unfortunately, he lacked the indomitable firmness of Turgot for economy. He now devotes himself to his chief duty as a finance minister, the Budget. It would be useless to attempt any description of this service. Suffice it to say that he showed here the same courage, clear-mindedness, and purity which always distinguished him.

Besides this he founded new chairs of science, law, literature, medicine, hydro-dynamics, the metrical system. By an order of March 24, 1776, he founded the *Caisse d'Escompte* (Discount Bank).

In 1775 (assisted by his friend and secretary, Dupont de Nemours) he laid out a system of local government, which, however, was not realized, owing to his loss of office; and the same may be said for his system of national education. The nobles and the clergy, the two great classes in France, were his enemies. They could not forget or forgive his destruction of their privileges and his demand for toleration; and he had no support from public opinion or a constitution, and very little from the king. The queen disliked him.

“He had the audacity to desire that Christian principles should govern public as well as private life.”

In January, 1776, he addressed to the king his "six projects of edicts" against many abuses, particularly the cruel *corvée* and *jurandes*. As these taxes favored the privileged classes, there was a great opposition to them. Turgot stood almost alone. The king apparently took side with his minister; and the edict was signed for all six, January and February, 1776.

"It was necessary that the six edicts should be registered by the Parliament in order to acquire legal force. Here there was a bitter opposition. The king remained firm, and all of the edicts were registered by an unwilling Parliament." "Turgot had gained a victory, but by it he lost his ministry."

All of his enemies united against him. "Intrigue followed upon intrigue." The weak king, once so profuse in expressions of confidence, deserted him; and so did his friend Malesherbes. He addressed several bold letters to the king, warning him of the dangers he was running from selfish advisers. But in vain. He was dismissed May 12, 1776. "The reformers were in despair.

"His enemies now had their own way. Dupont, his private secretary, was exiled, the *corvées* were re-estab-

lished, so the *jurandes*, the freedom of the corn trade was suppressed."

It cannot perhaps be said that the horrors of the Revolution would have been avoided, had M. Turgot's advice been taken; but there is little doubt that they would have been lessened.

"Turgot's dismissal closed forever his public life." He had apparently failed. This was inevitable. He found an ignorant and barbarous people, a selfish, prejudiced nobility, a sensual and weak king. He was superior to his times. Had he lived now, he would have been nearer to his age. Yet even now we are scarcely fully up to him. Still, it will come.

He carried into retirement a serene and cheerful mind. Though still suffering severely from malady, he gave himself up to science, literature, and the relief of the unfortunate. There is no reason to believe that he ever complained of the deceit and neglect which he had received at court.

Geometry, optics, astronomy, literature, and the classics. One of his last employments was to translate Horace's ode "*Aequam memento.*" We have seen him cherishing his youth by the classics: we now find him

delighting his old age by the same means. To his happy days they had been an ornament: to these seemingly adverse days they were a refuge and solace.

In other words, he illustrated the words of Cicero: "Nam haec studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant; adversis rebus solatium et per fugium praebent, secundis ornamentum."

He was, it is claimed by some, the author of the epigrammatic inscription on Franklin's portrait,— "Eripuit caelo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis"; by others that it originated with Manillus, a Latin poet, and was paraphrased by Turgot. In his retirement he enjoyed the society and correspondence of Lavoisier, D'Alembert, Condorcet, Boilieu, Reed, Franklin, and Dr. Price, the strong friend of America, Adam Smith, and others. He attended the meetings of the Academy of Inscriptions, of which he was Vice-Director in 1777.

He lived long enough to see the rise of the American republic. In common with Rousseau, Kant, Dr. Richard Price of London, and other philosophers, he entertained high hopes about it. They fancied they saw at last a nation founded on the highest Christian,

social, and economic principles. He wrote criticisms on the proposed constitution, which were answered by John Adams in three volumes.

In his celebrated letter to Dr. Richard Price, March 22, 1778, he writes: "She [America] is independent beyond recovery. Will she be free and happy? Will she give to the world an example of a constitution under which man may enjoy his rights, freely exercise all his faculties, and be governed only by nature, reason, and justice?" "They [Americans] are the hope of the world. They may become a model to it. They may prove by fact that men may be free, and yet tranquil, and rescue themselves from the bonds in which tyrants have placed them. They may exhibit an example of political, religious, and commercial liberty, and of industry. The asylum they open to the oppressed of all nations should console the earth." "He thought that the example of America would benefit the world by compelling princes to be just." "He foresaw our vanity and prejudices, and cautioned us against the bad practices of Europe,"— America becoming an image of Europe,— "a mass of divided powers contending for territory and commerce, and

continually cementing the slavery of the people by their own blood." He foresaw the danger from slavery in the Southern States ("slavery incompatible with a good political constitution").

"The glory of arms is nothing to those who enjoy the happiness of living in peace. The glory of arts and sciences belongs to every man who can acquire it. The field of discovery is boundless, and all profit by the discoveries of all." "I believe the Americans are bound to become great, not by war, but by culture."

"He feared for us the influence of the commercial spirit [*l'esprit mercantile*], the prejudice of the aristocratic English against our republican constitution, taxation, prohibitive laws, exclusive commerce." Had we heeded these cautions, we should be the "model republic" to-day.

It was that *l'esprit mercantile* which led us to permit the introduction of slavery into our Constitution, to the disgraceful Mexican War, to our own Civil War, and, above all, to this silly, wicked war with Spain, struggling, as we once did, to preserve her union; again, to this excessive so-called protective tariff, leading logically to anarchy, and to rejoicing in the commercial and industrial misfortunes of other peoples.

He met his approaching death with the utmost serenity, because of his belief in God, goodness, truth, and immortality.

He died in Paris, March 18, 1781, fifty-four years of age.

SOME OF THE IDEAS, PRINCIPLES, OR
LESSONS TAUGHT BY TURGOT.

IN the first place, we have a man of entire truth, purity, simplicity, moderation, courage, and cheerfulness. "He believed truth to be the most powerful of our moral perceptions." He never recommended a measure because it was expedient or favorable to his party, but because he believed it to be true and for the benefit of all France. In the preambles of his edicts he endeavored always to make this appear.

Amid the impurity of the court he kept his own purity. "Still amid noise, spotless amid sin."

Moderation in reform. A fanatical love of liberty and patriotism were not virtues in his eyes.

Bold before the king, a people in riot, and official corruption.

He exhibited that rarest of all virtues, the possession of contrasted qualities in one person,—justice and humanity, firmness and sensibility, exact reason and

subtle action. The key-note to his aims and theory was not pity or benevolence, but justice; and yet no one felt more or did more for his suffering fellow-countrymen than he. "He rated practical work very low compared with the achievements of the student and thinker." "It is the dreamer who rules the world: practical men only think they do." "The happy combination is when the two are found in one person, as they were in Turgot." "The light that a man of letters is able to diffuse must sooner or later destroy all the artificial evils of the human race, and place it in a position to enjoy all the good that nature offers." He was an optimist and a Platonist.

He believed in the "plain people," that they are capable of and desirous of instruction and morality. "You cannot serve the people by lying to them," or distrusting or playing with them.

The Physiocrates, of whom he was the most brilliant member, were the first to introduce common sense and scientific methods into the treatment of social, economical, and political questions. The errors inseparable from the first steps — a degraded people, a corrupt and selfish nobility and kings — prevented them from realiz-

ing them in their own day. But through Adam Smith, Bentham, Thomas Place, the two Mills, Sir Robert Peel, Cobden, Gladstone, and others, the work has gone on, and will go on to the perfect day,

He considered unjust laws the chief cause of immorality. He desired the people to enjoy

1. Free Trade ;
2. Unrestriction ;
3. One simple land tax ;
4. Simple civil laws ;
5. Humane and just criminal laws.

A government based on such principles would be a republic. But Turgot used to say, "I have never SEEN A TRULY REPUBLICAN constitution." This was simply because there had never been one, and, alas ! is not now.

"Almost every social and economical improvement in Europe and America, for the last hundred years or more, had its germ in the teaching of men who belonged to that early economists' 'School of France.'"—*Stephens's Turgot*, p. 65.

"Turgot's letter of Feb. 15, 1765, on the doctrine of Free Trade, is a model of argument on that subject now as well as then."

“To see life made easier and nobler for the people was ever the yearning of his heart. Through his public career, from first to last, and after his seeming disgrace as well, we have seen how true he was to the aspiration of his youth.” — *Stephens's Turgot*.

To show this, Mr. Stephens quotes from letters written at the Sorbonne in his youth, and from his last written State paper. The labors, the disappointments of life, had not dimmed the dreams of his youth.

SOME OF THE OPINIONS OR ESTIMATES
OF HIM BY CONTEMPORARIES AND
OTHERS.

CONDORCET, his great biographer, in his "Vie de Turgot," which should be familiar to every one in the public service, writes: "His official career is forever memorable in the history of social politics. Never had a public man given himself to the service of the community with more earnest and unselfish devotion. Altogether one of the most massive and imposing figures of the eighteenth century. A character of austere grandeur and single-mindedness, absolutely unselfish. He lived only for France, truth, and duty."

Malebranche said of him, "He had the head of Bacon, and the heart of L'Hôpital."

Voltaire, on hearing of the dismissal of Turgot, writes, "I am overwhelmed by despair, I am really dead since Turgot is deprived of power." He addressed to him the fine "Épître à un Homme."

The Archbishop of Aix said, "I feel it an honor to have been born in the century with Turgot."

Dr. Richard Price, D.D., LL.D., of London, the steadfast friend of America during our Revolution, a correspondent of Turgot, writes of him: "A new reign produced a new minister of finance in France, whose name will be respected by posterity for a set of measures as new to the political world as any late discoveries in the system of nature have been to the philosophical world. These measures are distinguished by their tendency to lay a solid foundation for endless peace, industry, and a general enjoyment of the gifts of nature, arts, and commerce."—*Observations, by Richard Price, D.D., LL.D.*, p. 107.

John Stuart Mill writes of him in his Autobiography, page 113: "Long before I had enlarged the basis of my intellectual creed, I had obtained poetic culture by means of reverential admiration for the lives and characters of heroic persons, especially of the heroes of philosophy; above all, by Condorcet's 'Life of Turgot,' one of the wisest and noblest of lives by one of the wisest and noblest of men. His heroic virtue deeply affected me; and I recurred to it, as others do

to a favorite poet, when needing to be carried up into the more elevated regions of thought and feeling. This book cured me of my sectarian follies. The passage commencing, 'Il regardait toute secte comme nuisible,' and explaining why Turgot always kept himself perfectly distinct from the Encyclopædists, sank deeply into my mind. I left off designating myself and others as Utilitarians; and by the pronoun 'we,' or any other collective designation, I ceased to *afficher* sectarianism."—*J. S. Mill's Autobiography*, p. 113.

John Morley writes, "His [Turgot's] sublime intellectual probity never suffered itself to be tempted."

A. V. Dicey, in *New York Nation*, vol. xxi., p. 321: "Voltaire, the prophet, Turgot, the saint of philosophers."

The French economist, Jean Baptiste Léon Say, who came soon after M. Turgot, writes: "I speak of Turgot not as a defeated man, but as a victor, because, if he failed in the eighteenth century, he has in fact dominated the century following. He founded the Political Economy of the nineteenth century; and, by the freedom of industry which he bequeathed to us, he has impressed on the nineteenth century the mark which will best characterize it in history."

Again : " There are hardly any works which can yield to the journalist and to the statesman an ampler harvest of facts and of instruction than may be found in the writings of Turgot."— *Traité d'Économie Politique*, ii. 555, *quoted by Stephens in his " Life of Turgot."*

Extracts from Carlyle's " French Revolution " : —

" There is a young, still docile, well-intentioned King ; a young beautiful and bountiful, well-intentioned Queen ; and with them all France, as it were, become young. Instead of a profligate, bankrupt Abbé Terray, we have now, for Controller-General, a virtuous, philosophic Turgot, with a whole Reformed France in his head. By whom whatsoever is wrong, in France or otherwise, will be righted—as far as possible. Is it not as if Wisdom herself were henceforth to have seat and voice in the Council of Kings ? Turgot has taken office with the noblest plainness of speech to that effect ; been listened to with the noblest royal trustfulness. It is true, as King Louis objects, ' They say he never goes to Mass ' ; but liberal France likes him little worse for that ; liberal France answers, ' The Abbé Terray always went. ' Philosophism sees, for the first time, a Philosophe (or even a Philosopher) in

office ; she in all things will applaudingly second him ; neither will light old Maurepas obstruct, if he can easily help it."

"Turgot is altering the Corn-trade, abrogating the absurdest Corn-laws."

"Turgot has faculties ; honesty, insight, heroic volition ; but the Fortunatus' Purse he has not. Sanguine Controller-General !"

". . . On the very threshold of the business, he proposes that the Clergy, the Noblesse, the very Parlements be subjected to taxes like the People ! One shriek of indignation and astonishment reverberates through all the Château galleries ; M. de Maurepas has to gyrate : the poor King, who had written a few weeks ago, 'Il n'y a que vous et moi qui aimions le peuple' (There is none but you and I that has the people's interest at heart), must write now a dismissal ; and let the French Revolution accomplish itself, pacifically or not, as it can."

"As for the man's opinion, it is not listened to ; wherefore he will soon withdraw, a second time ; back to his books and his trees. In such King's Council what can a good man profit ? Turgot tries it not a sec-

ond time: Turgot has quitted France and this Earth, some years ago; and now cares for none of these things."

In 1876 the Société d'Économie Politique of France caused a medal to be struck in joint honor of Turgot and Adam Smith. There can be no doubt that the great Frenchman influenced the great Englishman.

It has been said of France that, though the bulk of the people is so near the animal, no race has produced so many men of genius. Here, certainly, was one in the field of politics, legislation, administration, and economics.

Quisnam igitur liber? Sapiens *sibi qui imperiosus,*
 Quem neque pauperies, neque mors neque vincula terrent,
 Responsare cupidinibus, contemnere honores
 Fortis, et in se ipso totus, teres atque rotundus
 Externi ne quid valeat per leve morari,
 In quem manca ruit semper Fortuna.

Horace, Satires, ii., 7, 83.

"Who, then, is free? the wise man *who has dominion over himself*; whom neither poverty, nor death, nor chains affright; brave in the checking of his appetites

and in contemning honors; and, perfect in himself, polished and round as a globe, so that nothing from without can retard, in consequence of its smoothness; against whom misfortune ever advances ineffectually."

Smart's Translation.

I have found it very difficult to learn the date of the death and the place of interment of M. Turgot. Lately, however, through the great patience and industry of M. Émile Terquem, the well-known bookseller of Paris, I am informed that "M. Turgot died at his hotel, Rue de Bourbon, and was buried in the church of the Incurables" (journal of Paris, 22d of March, 1781, Interments).

AUTHORITIES.

I have quoted freely from them without acknowledgment.

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by Richard Price, D.D., LL.D. London: T. Cadett. 1785.

With a letter from M. Turgot.

Horace, Smart’s Translation.

There is an admirable collection of works on M. Turgot in the
Athenæum and Public Library.

I was very much aided in this study by the very intelligent and
accommodating female assistants of these two institutions.

TURGOT.

(Lines on the anniversary of his death, 20 March, 1781.)

TURGOT! — a name to conjure with ;
A name for coming ages to admire :
A soul quite godlike ! — marrow-pith
Of honesty and intellectual fire.

One hundred years and two decades
Since thy decease have served but to inspire
A silly world — where memory soon fades —
With nobler vistas of thy great desire.

Since the past century the world
Has suffered turmoils thou didst seek avert ;
Those of thy day thy wisdom hurled
Into the roadway, trod it in the dirt.

Thou then aside in sorrow turned ;
Meekness and pity made thee greater still :
'Midst torture men thy lesson learned,
Which had been painless, had they heard thy will.

'Tis ever thus, good men betrayed,
Distrusted, hated, spat upon, and curst ;
While rogues in tinsel-gilt arrayed
Barter a State to assuage their greedy thirst.

But truth once uttered must prevail,
However long the bidding-time may wage :
Men yet unborn shall gladly hail
Thy precepts, TURGOT, in the coming age !

F. TILLEMONT-THOMASON.

MARCH 18, 1898.

LETTER OF M. TURGOT, MINISTER OF
STATE IN FRANCE, TO DR. PRICE,
OF LONDON.

MR. FRANKLIN has given me, sir, as coming from you, the new edition of your "Observations upon Civil Liberty," etc. I owe you a double debt of gratitude: first, for the book itself, the value of which I have long known, and which I read with eagerness when it first appeared, notwithstanding the manifold occupations which overwhelmed me; second, for the courtesy with which you retracted your accusation of my *lack of policy*,* blame which you mingled with the praise you

*This refers to certain details concerning the administration of M. Turgot, which are found in the second treatise upon "Civil Liberty and the American War," by Dr. Price (page 150, etc.). In the first edition of this treatise, Mr. Price had mentioned, as one of the causes of M. Turgot's dismissal, his lack of tact. The latter, in a most valuable letter, informed the virtuous Englishman of the real reasons which had led to the removal from his official position. Such was the origin of a correspondence lasting until the death of Turgot, and to which belongs the letter the reader has before him. How the upright men, the enlightened minds in all countries of the globe, mourn the friend of humanity, the philosopher, the man great by his vast understanding, very great by his genius, still greater by his virtues; the man who had approached kings, lived in courts, negotiated with

otherwise bestowed upon me in your additional observations. I might have merited this reproach if you had no other unskilfulness in mind than that of not being able to unravel the intrigues which were woven around me by persons much more skilled in this art than myself,—an accomplishment I will never have and which I never wish to have. But it seemed to me that you accused me of having so little tact as to shock rudely the public opinion of my nation; and in this respect I believe that you neither rendered justice to me nor to the nation,—a people where there are many more brilliant lights than is commonly supposed in your country, and where it is perhaps easier to convert the public mind to reasonable ideas than is the case with you. These assertions I judge to be true by the infatuation of your nation for this absurd project of subjugating America, which lasted until the disaster of Burgoyne

all sorts and conditions of men, and had, nevertheless, kept such principles, such sentiments, and such opinions, and yet who was not permitted to restore a kingdom whose faults or wisdom were of equal importance to humanity! I know among those who have governed the world only one — Marcus Aurelius — worthy of having left a like spiritual work. Marcus Aurelius made the happiness of the world, by whom he was and is adored; and Turgot was not permitted to remain Minister of France for two years. And in the present generation, the generation honored by his works, by his noble deeds, may be counted a very large number of his detractors and of his enemies.

commenced to open the eyes of the English people. I judge it to be true by the ideas of monopoly and exclusion which predominate in the minds of all your political writers on commerce (I except Mr. Adam Smith and Dean Tucker),—a system which is the real reason for the separation from your colonies. And I also infer it from all your polemical writings on the questions which have agitated you for twenty years; yet, in all these productions, before your work on the subject appeared, I cannot remember ever having read one where the main point at issue was apprehended. I cannot conceive how a nation, which has cultivated with so much success all branches of natural sciences, has been able to remain so far below its natural capabilities in the most interesting of all sciences, that of the public welfare,—a science in which the liberty of the press, freedom only found in England, should have given that nation a marvellous advantage over all others of Europe. Is it national pride which has hindered you from profiting from this advantage? Is it because you were slightly better off than the others that you have turned all your speculations toward persuading yourself that you were lacking in nothing? Is

it the spirit of factions, the desire to gain the support of popular opinion, which has retarded your progress in making your politics treat as useless metaphysical* doctrines all thought toward establishing fixed principles concerning the rights and real interests of individuals and of nations? How is it that you should be almost the first among your writers to conceive just ideas of liberty, and to show the falseness of that hackneyed notion sustained by nearly all of the most republican writers,—*i.e.*, that liberty consists in being subject only to the law, as if a man oppressed by an unjust law could call himself free? This could not even be true if one were to suppose that all the laws are the production of the assembled nation; for, in the end, the individual also has rights which the nation can only take from him by violence and by an illegal use of power. Although you have recognized this truth, and reasoned it out to yourself, perhaps it merits still broader attention from you, considering the slight interest which has been shown in this question by the most zealous partisans of liberty.

It is indeed a strange thing that in England it was

* See Mr. Burke's letter to the sheriff of Bristol.

not a trivial truth to say that one nation may never have the right to govern another, and that such a government cannot have other foundation than force, which is also the foundation of robbery and tyranny; that the tyranny of nations is the most cruel and intolerable of all known tyrannies,—that which leaves the least recourse on the part of the oppressed. For, in the end, a despot is always checked in his own interests, he may feel the curb of his own remorse or the reproach of public opinion; but a multitude does not calculate, never experiences any remorse and claims the most glory when it merits the most shame.

The events which for several months have been precipitating themselves with an ever-increasing rapidity are, for the English people, a terrible commentary on your book. The dénouement has been reached, so far as America is concerned. We see her irrevocably independent. Will she be happy in her freedom? This new nation is situated so advantageously to give the world the example of a constitution where the individual enjoys all his rights, freely uses all his faculties, and is only to be governed by nature, right, and justice; but will the people know how to form such a

constitution? Will they know how to ground it upon eternal foundations, how to foresee all causes of division and of corruption which may gradually undermine and destroy it?

I confess I am not satisfied with the constitutions which, up to this time, have been drawn up by the different American States. You rightly reproach that of Pennsylvania for exacting the religious oath in order that a citizen may become a member of the Representatives. The others are worse. There is one, I believe that of the Jerseys, which exacts that one should believe in the divinity of Christ.* In a great number of these constitutions I see a useless imitation of English customs. Instead of uniting all authority in one source alone,—the nation,—different bodies have been established: a House of Representatives, a Council or Senate, a Governor, because England has a House of Commons, a House of Lords, and a King. They have tried to balance these different powers, as if this equilibrium of forces, which has always been thought neces-

* It is the constitution of Delaware that imposes the necessity of this oath. That of New Jersey, more impartial, prohibits all preference of one sect to another, and accords equal rights and privileges to all Protestants. (Hereafter, in regard to this subject, see the work of Dr. Price, to which I have taken the liberty of annexing some notes.)

sary to outweigh the preponderance of royalty, could be of any service in republics founded upon the equality of all citizens, and as if the forces, which by themselves established different bodies, were not in reality the true causes of divisions. In striving to prevent imaginary dangers, actual ones have been created. They wish to have nothing to fear from the clergy: they unite it under the barrier of a general proscription. In excluding it from the right of eligibility, a separate body has been made of it,—an element foreign to the State. Why should a citizen having the same interests as others in regard to common protection of liberty and of his property be excluded from offering to the public good his knowledge and his virtue simply because he belongs to a profession which in itself requires enlightenment and virtuous living? The Church is only dangerous when it exists as a body separate from the State, when it believes itself entitled to rights and interests as an organization, when a religion pretends to be recognized as one established by the law, as if men could have any right or interest in regulating each other's consciences, as if the individual could sacrifice for social advantage the opinion upon which

he believes his eternal salvation depends, as if saving or damning of souls were done by wholesale. Where true tolerance is established, where the government recognizes its absolute powerlessness over the consciences of individuals, the ecclesiast, when he is admitted to the national assemblies, is only a citizen. He becomes an ecclesiast only when he is debarred from them.

I fail to see that enough attention has been given to reducing to a minimum the various kinds of legislation intrusted to the government of each State, and likewise there has been little attempt made to separate cases for general administration from those pertaining to more local and particular legislation. Nor has enough thought been given to establishing local subsisting councils, which, fulfilling nearly all the detailed functions of the government, would obviate the necessity of the general conventions giving any attention to these matters; and thus from the members of the latter might be removed all means, and perhaps all desire, for abusing an authority which could only be applied to general subjects, and which must therefore be foreign to all the smaller passions which agitate mankind.

I fail to see that any attention has been paid to the great and only distinctions between classes of men which can be founded upon nature, the one of land-owners, and the other of non-proprietors. Their interests seem to have been neglected, and consequently, also, their differing rights relative to legislation, the administration of justice and law, contributions to public expenditures, and the use of the same.

No fixed principle established as to taxation.

It is presupposed that each province can levy its own taxes according to its fancy, can establish personal taxes, taxes upon its consumptions and importations; that is to say, it is able to create interests for itself contrary to those of other provinces.

Everywhere is inferred the right to regulate commerce. Even the executive bodies or the governors are authorized to prohibit the exportation of certain commodities in special emergencies, so far are they from comprehending that the law of entire freedom for all commerce is a corollary of the proprietary rights, to such an extent are they still plunged in the mist of European illusions.

In the general union of the provinces among them-

selves I fail to see complete coalition,—one fusion of all these parts which constitute the single and homogeneous body, the *Union*. It is only an aggregation of parts, with not enough unity, which are continually in danger of separating, more on account of the diversity of their laws, customs, and opinions than the inequality of their present comparative strength, and still more by the inequality of their subsequent progress. It is only a repetition of the Dutch Republic; and yet the latter did not have to fear, as has the new American Republic, the probable growth of some of its provinces. The whole edifice is at present grounded upon the false foundation of political thoughts, time-worn and common, upon the presumption that nations, provinces, (can have interests) as separate bodies, other than those possessed by all individuals; *i.e.*, the right of freedom and of defending their property against law-breakers and invaders. The nation at present is founded upon ancient prejudices: the pretended interest to carry on more commerce than others, not to buy foreign merchandise, but to force the countries to consume their own productions and the products of their manufactures; the pretended

advantage in always extending its territory, in acquiring such and such province, such and such island, such and such village; the desire to inspire fear in other nations; the wish to surpass them by military glory and by the splendor of arts and sciences.

Some of these presumptions have fomented in Europe, because the old rivalry between nations, and also the ambition of the crowned heads, have obliged all the States to maintain a standing army in order to defend themselves against their armed neighbors, and have caused them to consider military force as the principal part of the government. America has the good fortune, for a long time to come, not to have any exterior enemy to fear, unless she should succumb to interior division. Therefore, she is able to, and should, appreciate at their real value these feigned interests, these causes of discord, which alone are to be feared for her liberty. With the sacred principle of commercial freedom considered as a continuation of proprietary rights, all the fallacies in regard to laws or commerce disappear. The concern to extend more or less their jurisdiction vanishes before the principle that territory does not belong to the nations, but to the individuals

who have proprietary rights over the lands ; and the question of deciding to which province or State such a district, such a village, should adhere, ought not to be decided by the interests of this same province or State, but by those of the inhabitants of the district or village. It is for them to assemble to transact their affairs in the place most conveniently reached by them ; and it is the decision just how great this distance may be from a man's home, to permit of his fulfilling his important duties in the general councils without injuring the discharge of his home cares, which determines a national and rational limitation to the territory included in one jurisdiction or one State, and establishes a unity of size and force * which removes all danger of inequality and all pretension of superiority.

The advantage gained from being feared avails little when one is demanding nothing of others, and when one is in a position not liable to be attacked by large forces with any hope of success.

The glory of war does not equal the happiness of living in peace. The glory of the arts and sciences

* The inequality in size and strength of the various States seems to me the most unfavorable circumstance which the situation of the Americans offer. (See the notes appended to the work of Mr. Price.)

belongs to whomsoever wishes to avail himself of them. There are harvests in these fields for every one. The range of discoveries is inexhaustible, and the whole world profits by the discoveries of each individual. I imagine that the American people are far from realizing all these truths, and they must acknowledge them in order to secure the welfare of posterity. I do not blame their leaders. It was necessary to provide for the needs of the moment, in the face of an enemy powerful and to be feared; and the only expedient was such a union as has been formed. There was no time to think then of correcting the faults of the constitutions of the various States; but great care should be taken not to perpetuate these mistakes, and means should be sought to unite the different opinions and interests, and to bring them to some uniform principles in all the provinces.

And in this respect there are great obstacles to conquer. In Canada,* the constitution of the Roman

* It appears that M. Turgot regarded as inevitable the union of Canada with the American Republic. Canada still belongs to England, but it is not the philosopher who was mistaken. If politics could have done in the beginning what they will infallibly be forced to do later, England would no longer try on Canada the ruinous experiments in which she is now engaged, and the true friends of English prosperity would rejoice.

Catholic Church and the existence of a class of nobility; in New England, the spirit of rigid Puritanism which still exists, and which, it is said, is slightly intolerant; in Pennsylvania, a large number of citizens establishing, as a religious principle, that the possession of fire-arms is unlawful, and consequently refusing to take any part in establishing, as the foundation of the State, military force, the union of the attributes of a good citizen with those of a soldier, and militia-man,—an attitude which necessarily forces the military profession to be a mercenary one; in the Southern colonies, too great an inequality in the division of wealth. And especially unfortunate is the great number of black slaves, whose bondage is incompatible with a good political constitution, and yet restoring them their liberty would cause an embarrassing situation, forming, as it would, two nations in the same State.

In all these difficulties are to be seen the prejudices, the attachment to established forms, the custom of certain systems of taxation and the reluctance to establish those which should replace them, the pride of some colonies which believe themselves more powerful than others, and an unfortunate commencement of false

national pride. I believe these Americans destined to become greater, not by war, but by culture. If, in the extension of civilizing forces, they were to ignore the immense wastes which reach as far as the Western Sea,* there soon would be established there a miscellaneous horde of outlaws and worthless rabble escaped from the severity of the law, savages and tribes of brigands who would ravage America as the northern barbarians ravaged the Roman Empire. From this fact arises another danger,—the necessity of having military forces stationed on the frontiers and being in a constant state of war. The colonies bordering the frontiers would consequently be more accustomed to military action than others, and this difference in military forces would form a terrible incentive and stimulus to dangerous ambitions. The remedy for all this would be to maintain the standing army, to which every province should contribute according to its population. But the Americans, who still have all the fears prop-

* By the Western Sea must be understood the northern part of the Pacific Ocean, not a great interior sea such as M. Turgot seems to have believed in, according to the doctrines of Messrs. d'Isle, Bruache, and other French geographers, who, from reports made by the savages, imagined the existence of this Western Sea. The English were the ones who taught us that such a body of water did not exist.

erly belonging to the English, dread a permanent army more than any other thing. They are wrong. Nothing is easier than to bind the constitution of a standing army with that of the militia in such a manner that thereby the militia becomes better and liberty is placed on a firmer basis than before. But it is difficult to calm their fears on this point.

Here are many difficulties, and perhaps the secret interests of powerful individuals will unite with the prejudices of the masses to stop the efforts of the truly wise and conscientious citizens.

It is impossible not to formulate the wish that this people may attain the greatest prosperity of which it is capable. It is the hope of the human race: it may become its model. It should prove to the world by deeds that men can be free and peaceful, and are able to dispense with fetters of all kinds which the tyrants and various impostors have pretended to impose upon them under the pretext of public good. It should give the example of political liberty, religious liberty, and commercial and industrial liberty. The refuge which the American people offer to the oppressed of all nations should be a source of comfort

to the world. The facility of profiting by this, to escape the consequences of bad legislation, will force the government to be just and to become more and more enlightened. The remainder of the world will open its eyes little by little upon the nothingness of the delusions which have always been practised on politics. But, in order that all these good results may be brought about, it will be necessary for America to keep itself from becoming an image of our Europe,—a fact often reiterated by your ministerial writers. It must take care not to become a collection of divided powers disputing for territory among themselves, and for the commercial profits continually cementing the bondage of the people with their own blood.

All enlightened men, all friends of humanity, should unite their knowledge at this time, and concur with the thoughtful Americans in the great work of their legislation. Such a mission would be worthy of you, sir. I wish I were able to kindle your zeal. If in this letter I have yielded to the temptation of pouring out my own ideas, this desire has been my only motive, and will exonerate me, I hope, from the ennui I may have caused you. I wish that the blood which has

been shed and that which will be in this conflict may not be fruitless toward procuring the welfare of the human race.

Our two nations are about to injure each other greatly, without either one or the other drawing any real profit by it. Probably the only result will be the increase of debts and expenses, perhaps the bankruptcy of the State and the ruin of a great number of citizens.

England seems to me to be nearer this crisis than France. If instead of this war you could have complied gracefully from the first, if politics could have done in the beginning what they will infallibly be forced to do later, if the national opinion could have permitted your government to ward off the events (taking it for granted that it would have been willing to prevent them), if it could have consented at first to the independence of America without a war, by such a change of events I firmly believe your nation would have lost nothing. As it is, England will lose to-day what she has expended in these colonies and what she will still further expend; she will for some time experience a great decrease in her commerce, many

serious internal commotions, if the nation should be forced to bankruptcy; and in any case there is sure to be a great diminution in her political influence abroad. But this last matter is of very little importance for the real welfare of a people; and I am not at all of the opinion expressed by Abbé Raynal, quoted in your epigraph.* I do not believe that this will lead you to become a despicable nation, or force you into bondage.

On the contrary, perhaps your misfortunes will have the effect of a necessary amputation. Perhaps they were the only method of saving you from the gangrene of luxury and corruption. If, in your agitation, you could revise your constitution in making the elections annual, dividing the right of representation in a more equal manner, and more in proportion to the interests of those represented, you would perhaps gain by this revolution as much as has America; for your liberty

* "Nevertheless, if the enjoyment of luxury should succeed in entirely perverting the national morals, if England lost her colonies by dint of extending or repressing them, she herself would sooner or later be brought under subjection. This nation would then resemble so many others, which it now despises, and Europe would not be able to point out to the universe one nation in which it would dare take any pride."—*Philosophical and Political History of the Commerce of the Two Indias*, Book XIX., vol. vi. p. 89. Geneva, 1780.

would remain to you, and with it and by it you would soon repair your other losses.

Sir, you will be able to judge of the respect which you have inspired in me by the candor with which I have spoken on these delicate points, and also of the satisfaction I experience in realizing that there is some resemblance in our ways of thinking.

I count upon this communication being absolutely confidential. And I even ask you not to answer in detail by the post, as your reply would invariably be opened; and I should be found guilty of being too great a friend of liberty for a minister, even for one who has been disgraced.

I have the honor, etc.,

(Signed)

TURGOT.

MARCH 22, 1778.

(Translated by Helen Billings Morris.)

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